

PREMIER'S OFFICE--Premier Responds to Indefinite Closure of Bowater Mill

NOTE: The following is a statement from Premier Darrell Dexter.

At a meeting earlier today, Resolute informed the province that due to global economic changes, including the struggling Euro, the company is no longer in a position to operate the Bowater newsprint mill in Queens County.

This of course comes as a huge blow to the workers, their families and the community in Queens, and throughout southwest Nova Scotia.

For generations the Bowater mill has been a source of good jobs and revenue for the area, supplying work for businesses throughout the region and the entire province.

Having grown up in the community, it is particularly difficult to watch as a major employer for the area is forced to shut down, knowing there's nothing more that can be done.

I believe it was the province's responsibility to do everything it could to protect jobs on the South Shore, and to help this mill survive.

I have no regrets about the investments we made in the community, the workers and their families.

I'd rather fight for good, secure jobs with every reasonable effort than never try at all.

The provincial assistance offered to Resolute last fall included a land purchase and a capital loan.

I can confirm that all monies advanced to the company against the loan were returned to the province this week.

The 25,000 acres of land the province purchased was some of the highest-value freehold land in Nova Scotia. The conservation value and importance of this land to various communities, including the Mi'kmaq, will provide ongoing value to the province for generations.

The province's job is far from over.

This closure shows that no mill and no industry -- even in rural Nova Scotia -- are immune to the challenges facing the global economy.

Mills across North America are facing similar challenges, and have had to make tough choices.

This has not happened because of a lack of effort, on anyone's part.

I'm told that the mill reached the competitive targets set out in December. The workers did a fantastic job in keeping the mill running and competitive, and I thank them for that.

These men and women went above and beyond what anyone could ever expect of them at such a difficult time.

This is indeed a disappointing day, but those workers and their families should not be disappointed in the commitment and dedication they showed over the past six months.

I understand that today many people are feeling uncertain about the future.

But I know that Queens is strong and resilient. The area has been able to thrive despite all the changes and challenges it has faced over the years.

The people of Queens County have the spirit and strength of character to overcome this most recent setback, and ensure a good future for their children and grandchildren.

And the province will be right there with them.

In the coming days, the province will put resources on the ground from departments across government to help provide stability, support and leadership to help keep the community strong.

I have already begun discussions to appoint a transition advisor to work with the community, local business leaders and the municipalities to help keep the economy growing.

By working together we will find a better path forward - a path that sees future generations living and working in Queens County, and throughout southwest Nova Scotia.

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